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Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

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Implementation of the conclusions and recommendations for follow-on actions of the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

Summary update to the reports submitted by Austria

1. Introduction

1. Pursuant to action 20 of the action plan on nuclear disarmament adopted at the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, and to underline the importance of transparency and confidence-building, Austria submits the present update to the reports for the meetings of the Preparatory Committee in 2013 (NPT/CONF.2015/PC.II/1) and 2014 (NPT/CONF.2015/PC.III/19), as well as for the 2015 Review Conference (NPT/CONF.2015/28). The report outlines the national activities carried out since 2015 to implement the conclusions and recommendations for follow-on actions of the 2010 Review Conference.

2. Nuclear disarmament

Action 1 of the action plan on nuclear disarmament

2. Austria has continued to pursue a world without nuclear weapons, based firmly on the Treaty as the cornerstone of the international nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime.

3. On the occasion of the Vienna Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, in December 2014 (see NPT/CONF.2015/28), Austria issued a pledge in which it committed itself to vigorously pursuing efforts towards nuclear disarmament. This pledge was subsequently renamed the Humanitarian Pledge and has now been endorsed by more than 120 States.

4. At the 2015 Review Conference, on 28 April 2015, the Minister for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs of Austria, Sebastian Kurz, delivered a statement on behalf of 159 States that was dedicated to the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons.

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5. Later in 2015, Austria was among the initiators of four General Assembly resolutions relating to nuclear disarmament (70/33, 70/47, 70/48 and 70/50).

6. Throughout 2016, Austria actively engaged in the deliberations held in Geneva by the Open-ended Working Group taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations, which was established pursuant to General Assembly resolution 70/33. Austria submitted in particular two working papers to the Group in its national capacity.

7. On 21 September 2016, the Minister for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs addressed the General Assembly and reiterated Austria's commitment to achieving a world without nuclear weapons by calling for and outlining a concrete path towards the elimination of all nuclear weapons worldwide.

8. Austria was among the initiators of General Assembly resolution 71/258 on taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations, adopted on 23 December 2016 by a large majority of the States Members of the United Nations. Pursuant to the resolution, negotiations within the framework of the United Nations for an instrument prohibiting nuclear weapons, leading to their total elimination, are scheduled to take place in New York from 27 to 31 March and from 15 June to 7 July 2017. The legal instrument under negotiation aims to contribute to the implementation of article VI of the Treaty, thereby strengthening the Treaty as a whole. In the course of the seventy-first session of the General Assembly, Austria has also supported other initiatives relating to nuclear disarmament, such as resolution 71/259 on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

Actions 6, 7 and 9

9. Austria, as a member State of the Conference on Disarmament, has continued to support efforts to revitalize that forum.

Actions 12 to 14

10. Austria has continued to use all occasions, whether in bilateral or multilateral forums, to promote the ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty by States that have not yet done so, with a view to its early entry into force. The former Secretary-General for Foreign Affairs of Austria, Johannes Kyrle, has continued to work actively as a member of the Group of Eminent Persons of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization, assisting with outreach efforts to bring about the entry into force of the Treaty. Austria has also continued to participate in the funding of the organization's certified radionuclide laboratory in Seibersdorf. The Ministry of Defence of Austria has continued to provide in-kind support to the organization free of charge (through training sites, equipment and personnel).

Action 19

11. Austria has continued to support the Office for Disarmament Affairs of the United Nations, in particular through substantial financial assistance to its branch office established in Vienna in 2012.

Action 22

12. Austria has continued to support education efforts aimed at disarmament and non-proliferation, primarily by supporting the Vienna Centre for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation,[1] which was established in 2011 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Austria and the James Martin Centre for Non-Proliferation Studies. The Centre engages in a broad range of activities, such as lectures, seminars and publications, thereby benefitting the international dialogue on disarmament and non-proliferation issues taking place in Vienna and elsewhere.

3. Non-proliferation

Action 23

13. Austria has continued to stress the Treaty's role as the cornerstone of the international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. Accordingly, Austria promotes actively the universalization of the Treaty, both in its national capacity and by contributing to the design and implementation of relevant policies of the European Union.

Actions 24 to 29

14. Austria is among the States that have both a comprehensive safeguards agreement and an additional protocol with the International Atomic Energy Agency in force, which represents the current verification standard of the Agency. Austria is also among the States for which the Agency has drawn the broader conclusion that all nuclear material in the country remains used for peaceful activities, and for which integrated safeguards are being implemented.

Actions 35 to 39

15. With a view to ensuring that nuclear-related exports do not directly or indirectly contribute to the development of nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, Austria has been applying the understandings of the Zangger Committee and the guidelines developed by the Nuclear Suppliers Group.

16. With a view to halting the proliferation of ballistic missiles, which could be used as a means of delivery for nuclear warheads, Austria has been applying the export control guidelines of the Missile Technology Control Regime and has implemented the transparency and confidence-building measures enshrined in the International Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation, for which Austria has continued to function as the executive secretariat and Immediate Central Contact.

Actions 40 to 46

17. Austria has adhered to all legal instruments regarding physical protection and the suppression of acts of nuclear terrorism and has incorporated their principles and provisions into its national legislation and implemented them.

[1] www.vcdnp.org.

4. Peaceful uses of nuclear energy

Action 47

18. Like other States, Austria exercises the inalienable right under article IV of the Treaty to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes in conformity with articles I, II and III, while respecting the corresponding rights of other States. This right entails the option not to use nuclear power, without, however, the outright renunciation of the right recognized in the Treaty to do so. Austria continues to hold the view that nuclear power can never be 100 per cent safe and that, given the long-term effects of nuclear accidents and the responsibilities attached to the nuclear fuel cycle, nuclear power does not contribute to sustainable development. Given the combination of safety, security and proliferation concerns, nuclear power is, likewise, not a viable avenue to confront global challenges such as climate change. Consequently, the Federal Constitutional Act for a Non-Nuclear Austria of 1999 prohibits, inter alia, the use of nuclear fission for the generation of power in Austria.

Actions 48 to 58

19. Austria views the role of the International Atomic Energy Agency as central in guaranteeing that countries exercise their right under article IV of the Treaty in accordance with the best safety, security and non-proliferation standards. Austria has therefore continued to support the Agency in this regard, inter alia, by paying its assessed contributions to the Agency and its share to the Agency's Technical Cooperation Fund in full and on time, and by supporting the creation and maintenance of the Agency's infrastructure.

Actions 59 to 64

20. Austria reaffirms the importance of ongoing international efforts to improve the global nuclear safety regime, including the robust implementation of the Agency's Action Plan on Nuclear Safety, and notes the central role of the Agency in the sharing and application of the lessons learned from the accident at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power station. Furthermore, Austria emphasizes the importance for all States, in particular those with nuclear fuel cycle activities, to become party to all conventions and agreements relevant to safety and security and to support the further development, as necessary, of legally binding instruments to ensure a better global safety and security framework. Austria is party to all conventions in the area of nuclear safety, and an active participant in corresponding review processes. Austria also has a strong civil nuclear liability regime in place.

21. Austria is eliminating highly enriched uranium in national civilian stocks and in use. Together with Norway, Austria held the second International Symposium on the Minimization of Highly Enriched Uranium in Vienna, in 2012, and reported on it in working paper NPT/CONF.2015/PC.I/WP.1. There were a number of policy ideas and recommendations that the symposium co-hosts, Austria, Norway and the Nuclear Threat Initiative, identified as a possible policy agenda for the future. Those ideas and recommendations are aimed at promoting tangible progress, as well as a culture of transparency, trust and cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy that ensures the highest level of safety, security and non-proliferation. They concern the minimization of highly enriched uranium, civilian naval propulsion reactors and transparency, and a few of them concern the expansion of efforts in those fields.

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